

## Johnny Cash

# "Ballad Of The Harp Weaver"

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Son said my mother when I was knee high

You need of clothes to cover you and not a rag have I

There's nothing in the house to make a boy's britches

Nor shears to cut a cloth with nor thread to take  
stitches

There's nothing in the house but a leaf end of rye

And the harp with a with the woman's head nobody will  
by and she began to cry

That was in the early fall and when came the late fall

Son she said the sight of you makes your mother's  
blood crawl

Little skinny shoulder blades stickin' through your  
clothes

And where you get a jacket from God above knows

It's lucky for me lad your daddy's in the ground

And can't see the way I let his son go around and she  
made a queer sound

That was in the late fall when the winter came

I'd not a pair of bridges nor a shirt to my name

I couldn't go to school or out of doors to play

And all the other little boys passed our way

Son said my mother come climb into my lap

And I'll chafe your little knees while you take a nap

And oh but we were silly for half an hour or more

Me with my long legs draggin' on the floor  
I rocked rocked rocked to a mother goose rhyme  
Oh but we were happy for half an hour's time  
But there was I a great boy and what would folks say  
To hear my mother singin' me to sleep all day in such a  
daft way  
Men say the winter was bad that year fuel was scarce  
and food was dear  
A wind with a wolf's head howled about our door  
And we burned up the chairs and sat upon the floor  
All that was left us was a chair we couldn't break  
And the harp with the woman's head nobody would  
take for song or pity sake  
The night before Christmas I cried with the cold  
I cried myself to sleep like a two year old  
And in the deep night I felt my mother rise  
And stare down upon me with love in her eyes  
I saw my mother sitting on the one good chair  
A light falling on her face from I couldn't tell where  
Looking nineteen and not a day older  
And the harp with the woman's head leaned against  
her shoulder  
Her thin fingers moving in the thin tall strings  
Were weave weave weaving wonderful things  
Many bright threads from where I couldn't see  
Were running through the harp strings rapidly  
And gold threads whistlin' through my mother's hands

I saw the web grow and the pattern expand  
She wove a child's jacket and when it was done  
She laid it on the floor and wove another one  
She wove a red cloak so regal to see  
She's made it for a king's son I said and not for me but  
I knew it was for me  
She wove a pair of bridges and quicker than that  
She wove a pair of boots a little cocked hat  
She wove a pair of mittens she wove a little blouse  
She wove all night in the still cold house  
She sang as she worked and the harp strings spoke  
But her voice never faltered and the thread never  
broke  
But when I awoke there sat my mother  
With the harp against her shoulder lookin' nineteen and  
not a day older  
A smile about her lips and a light about her head  
And her hands in the harp strings frozen dead  
And piled up beside her toppling to the skies  
Were the clothes of a king's son just my size

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